

Washington, DC -Rep. Dave Reichert (WA-08), Chairman of the Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Science, and Technology, announced today that he has drafted legislation that will address the national emergency response problems exposed by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita last year. The legislation will mandate specific and substantial changes within the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), especially within the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

The Members making the announcement were Chairman Peter T. King (R-NY), Ranking Member Bennie Thompson (D-MS), Reps. Dave Reichert (R-WA) and Bill Pascrell (D-NJ), Chairman and Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Science, and Technology, and Reps. Michael McCaul (R-TX) and Bob Etheridge (D-NC), Chairman and Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Investigations.

The legislation, as drafted, includes a number of reforms to enhance the performance of FEMA and DHS, including:

- elevating, strengthening, and better integrating FEMA into DHS,
- providing FEMA with greatly enhanced resources;
- elevating the Director of FEMA to Undersecretary for Emergency Preparedness, and mandating that he/she report directly to the President in a time of crisis;
- requiring that the Undersecretary be an individual who possesses a demonstrated ability in and knowledge of emergency management and incident response; and establishing DHS Regional Offices
- and Regional Directors to more effectively coordinate with State and local officials, emergency response providers, and emergency response support providers, such as utilities, public health, public works, and transportation personnel.